

Police complaints statistics

Police force professional standards departments (PSDs) deal with the majority of complaints about the police. We investigate the most serious complaints and incidents and set the standards by which the police should handle complaints.

We collect information from all police forces in England and Wales about the types of complaints they are receiving, and how long they take to deal with them.

Each year, we publish statistics about the complaints that forces have logged. We also produce quarterly bulletins for all police forces.

Collecting this data is important. It develops our understanding of how different forces and local policing bodies are running the local police complaints system. It also allows us to identify good practice, trends and differences that we need to look into.

Our quarterly performance bulletins allow comparisons of complaint handling across forces.

This includes both national comparisons and comparisons of forces that are grouped because they are similar in terms of demographic, social and economic characteristics which relate to crime. The bulletins are an important tool to support oversight of the police complaints system and reflect our commitment to transparency and accountability.

The Policing and Crime Act 2017 and supporting regulations introduced a number of changes to the police complaints and disciplinary systems. The changes aim to put customer service at the forefront of complaint handling, and to increase the focus on learning and improvement. They also increase access to the complaints system, and ensure that matters can be dealt with at the appropriate level.

The new legislation came into effect on 1 February 2020. The statistics and quarterly performance data published here contains complaints handled under this new legislation. As the reforms overhauled the complaints system it is not possible to use the latest bulletins to make meaningful comparisons with bulletins published before 1 February 2020.